Reviewer’s report

Title: No MERS-CoV but positive influenza viruses in returning Hajj pilgrims, China, 2013-2015

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Reviewer: Gavin JD Smith

Reviewer’s report:

This manuscript presents the results of a straightforward surveillance in China of people returning from the Hajj. The surveillance was conducted to determine risk of import of MERS-CoV via Hajj returnees from the endemic area for MERS. The authors recruited 847 subjects and found no MERS but other respiratory pathogens were detected, mainly influenza A & B with a couple of cases each of hMPV, RSV and human CoVs. The finding that these subjects were most likely infected while in Saudi Arabia and the cases were therefore imported indicates that this could theoretically be a route of introduction for MERS CoV to China.

The study is straightforward and the results are interesting, unfortunately the paper is in need of some major editing for language and it is not suitable for publishing in its current form. There are also a few aspects of the methodology that are not clear and need to be better explained.

Specific comments.

Line 42 "This is the first report for MERS-CoV and respiratory viruses detection results at points of entry in China from 2013-2015".

There are a few instances of this language being used in the paper. The sentence reads that MERS-CoV was DETECTED in this study, which is not correct. Please change the sentence to "This is the first report for MERS-CoV and respiratory viruses molecular screening at points of entry in China from 2013-2015."

However I am not sure that the modified sentence is correct, surely there was some influenza screening done at airports in China during the 2009 pandemic? If this is the case the sentence should reflect that this is the first screening in returning pilgrims.

Line 49 "However, there was no significant difference among three years for respiratory virus positive participants."

This sentence needs to be clarified, what lack of difference are you referring to? Positive rates?

Line 53-55 This sentence is poorly written and needs to be corrected.

Line 60 Presumably "Nov 2015" is a typo.
Line 66 "suggested all countries to guide surveillance". What does this mean, please correct.

Line 69 Change detection results to screening, see comment for Line 42.

Line 72 Please correct the sentence "All participants took charter flights traveled to Mecca".

Line 73 Please correct the sentence "A total of 847 returning pilgrims were recruited MERS-CoV surveillance in this study."

Line 75 I am not sure what "were alarmed by the monitor" means, please clarify/correct.

Line 76 Please correct sentence to read "The rest of THE returning pilgrims without fever and other symptoms WERE randomly chosen to participate in this study".

Line 79 "were asked TO UNDERGO health examination".

Line 80 "in A local travel health center".

Line 85 Please clarify that you followed the protocols described in Refs 5 & 6.

Line 86 Please correct sentence to read "Moreover, samples from travelers with fever were ALSO TESTED for human metapneumovirus (HMPV), human respiratory syncytial virus (HRSV), and human coronaviruses HKU1, 229E and OC43".

Also, please state what methods were used for screening of these additional pathogens and provide the appropriate references.

Line 88 Change "steps at entries of airport" to "steps at the airports".

Line 93 Please correct sentence to read "and one participant each was positive for HKU1, 229E and OC43" or something similar.

Line 99 "were FOLLOWED up"

Line 102 Why is the data preliminary? Suggest changing senetence to something like "In this study we did not detect any MERS-CoV infection but influenza viruses were prevalent".

Line 113 "From this study, the influenza positive rates DURING THESE three years WERE relatively stable in annually returning Hajj pilgrims".

**Are the methods appropriate and well described?**
If not, please specify what is required in your comments to the authors.

No

**Does the work include the necessary controls?**
If not, please specify which controls are required in your comments to the authors.

Yes

**Are the conclusions drawn adequately supported by the data shown?**
If not, please explain in your comments to the authors.

Yes

**Are you able to assess any statistics in the manuscript or would you recommend an additional statistical review?**
If an additional statistical review is recommended, please specify what aspects require further assessment in your comments to the editors.

I am able to assess the statistics

**Quality of written English**
Please indicate the quality of language in the manuscript:

Not suitable for publication unless extensively edited

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